



ATF News

**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Los Angeles Field Division**

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ATF AND LONG BEACH POLICE ARREST 67 PEOPLE LINKED TO GANGS ON FIREARMS AND NARCOTIC CHARGES

LOS ANGELES – 19 federal defendants linked to local street gangs have been arrested over the past two days on firearms and narcotics charges while federal agents and Long Beach police were executing 4 search warrants as part of an investigation dubbed "Operation Rock Pile." Additionally, during the course of this joint investigation, 48 state defendants were arrested. A total of 72 defendants have now been charged in state and federal court as part of the investigation, with 5 defendants still outstanding.

Operation Rock Pile, which was led by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), focused on street level sales of firearms and narcotics by gang members. 58 firearms, \$36,000 in cash and a large quantity of narcotics were taken into custody.

The multi-agency enforcement action was announced at a press conference this afternoon by United States Attorney Thomas P. O'Brien, ATF Assistant Special Agent in Charge Christopher Shaefer, Los Angeles Police Department Captain William Hayes and Long Beach Commander Laura Farinella.

A total of 23 defendants have been indicted by a federal grand jury. The two dozen federal defendants are linked to 10 different gangs, some of which are based in Long Beach and some of which are outside the city limits. In addition to the defendants arrested this week, several are already either in state or federal custody. The defendants charged in federal court include a Long Beach man charged with two counts of distributing crack cocaine. That defendant -- because of his lengthy criminal record that includes 12 prior felony convictions, five of which are narcotics-related -- faces a potential mandatory sentence of life-without-parole in federal prison.

Most of the defendants charged in Superior Court have previous felony convictions that include attempted murder, rape of a minor under fourteen years of age, rape in concert with force or violence and battery of a child.

"Combating gang violence is not new to ATF Los Angeles," said Special Agent in Charge John A. Torres of ATF's Los Angeles Field Division. "The common goal of reducing violent crime in our cities will be achieved through the collaborative efforts of

federal, state and local law enforcement. The warrants executed this morning are an outstanding example of a collaborative effort made by ATF and the Long Beach Police Department to make our cities safer.”

United States Attorney Thomas P. O’Brien stated: “Federal law enforcement uses a number of different tactics to address gang problems. We conduct long-term investigations that focus on the leaders and so-called shot-callers of street gangs. We also conduct comprehensive investigations designed to completely dismantle gangs by treating them as the criminal enterprises that they are. Operation Rock Pile is part of an effort by federal authorities to assist in combating gangs in yet another way, by joining with local authorities to go into neighborhoods where there is a gang problem and quickly move to take gang foot soldiers off the streets.”

“The Long Beach Police Department has established a collaborative partnership with the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives,” said Chief Anthony W. Batts of the Long Beach Police Department. “Additionally, we have a long standing reputable zero tolerance policy pertaining to illegal sales of firearms and drugs. We are pleased to announce the outcome of this investigation and will continue our joint efforts to eradicate this type of activity.”

The following agencies assisted in the investigation: The Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department, Los Angeles County Probation Department, Department of Parole and Department of Children and Family Services (Multi-Agency Response Team).



Assistant Special Agent in Charge Christopher Schaefer, ATF Los Angeles Field Division (at the podium) along with U.S. Attorney Thomas P. O’Brien announce the arrest of gang members during “Operation Rock Pile.”